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MONTANA LETTER

PROCUREMENT SECTION
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September 14, 1972

PITS PREVENT POLLUTION

Most farmers and ranchers have been concentrating on grain harvest, haying, irrigating, getting children started in school and other varied activities. Add some of our usual unusual Montana weather, and this becomes a rather hectic time of the year.



This is the pit Lyle O'Dell (left) built for disposal of solid wastes from his ranching operation near Livingston. Frank Ashley (right), Park County executive director, says the pit, constructed with REAP cost-sharing, is 105 feet long, 11 feet wide, and 8 1/2 feet deep. The 279 cubic yards of earth which were excavated are piled nearby to be used in covering waste material as it is placed in the pit. The pit area is fenced with barb and woven wire to exclude livestock.

Hopefully, harvest will soon be successfully completed except for late maturing crops such as sugarbeets and corn silage. On this basis, we would like to remind you that the fall season is a good time to perform conservation and pollution abatement measures under the REAP program. Particularly appropriate to the fall season are all measures involving earth-moving, such as reorganizing irrigation systems, pollu-

tion abatement practices, concrete work and, in some areas, grass seeding.

One pollution abatement practice we would particularly commend for your consideration is the construction of pits for disposal of solid wastes. This may be especially desirable for many of you who do not live in organized garbage disposal districts or have an alternative acceptable method for disposing of poisonous, contaminating and just plain messy farm waste.

This year, for the first time, this practice is available to all Montana farmers and ranchers.

Montana was one of three States offering this practice on a pilot basis during the last two years. Three counties offered the practice in 1970 and 10 counties in 1971. We feel that it meets such an urgent need on most farms that it is available in all counties this year.

The practice offers 80 percent cost-sharing for excavating a pit and for fencing it to exclude stock and wildlife. It may be used for herbicide, insecticide and other chemical containers, for excess treated seed grain, dead animals and other farm garbage, including cans and bottles. The pits may not be used for car bodies and discarded farm machinery.

Our experience with these pits the past two years has been most favorable. The average cost of pits installed in 1971 was about \$330. With 80 percent cost-sharing, the average out-of-pocket cost per pit was about \$65.

Pits may be installed to serve a single farm family or several families. A pit to serve several farm families will be eligible for consideration under a pooling agreement. This might be especially desirable in areas where there is only one satisfactory site for a disposal pit and it is located conveniently for several families.

Pit sites should be away from a stream or irrigation ditch where seepage or drainage could enter a water course.



In Toole County, one of the pilot counties where it all began with five pits in 1970, cost-sharing to construct about 25 pits has been requested this year. This one is on the Robert Aschim farm east of Sunburst. It is 100 feet long, 14 feet wide at the top, 9 feet deep, and enclosed with 56 rods of fence. Size of pits is the decision of the builder so long as they are large enough to care for the farm waste for several years.

They may not be installed where the water table is near the surface. Of course, in conformity with State law, burning is not allowed in pits.

Disposal pit requests receive high priority consideration for cost-share funds in most counties. Properly installed, pits provide sanitary and aesthetic benefits both on the farms

where installed and for the entire community. We hope many of you who don't have a safe and non-polluting place to dispose of your farm garbage now will consider the advantages of a disposal pit. Your ASCS county office is ready to help you.

QUALITY SET-ASIDE IS STRESSED

The effectiveness of the wheat and feed grain programs in reducing production depends in large part on the quality, as well as the quantity, of acreage set-aside from production each year. Greater emphasis will be placed on the "quality" factor next year with a change which will base payments on the productive potential of the acreage set-aside when this is below average.

Payments will continue to be based on yields established for the farm when acreage designated as set-aside is equal in productivity to other cropland on the farm.

When less than average productivity acreage has been offered for set-aside in previous programs, payment reductions have been applied only to the lower quality acres. But a study of 1971 and 1972 operations indicates that these deductions sometimes did not offset the monetary advantage a producer gained by growing crops on average quality acreage and setting poorer acreage aside.

Under the 1973 program, county committees will appraise the average productivity of land offered for set-aside which is determined to be below average. If a farm, for example, has a 30 bushel established wheat yield and the committee determines that the set-aside acreage has only 80 percent of the productive potential of the land normally planted to wheat, the wheat certificate and additional wheat set-aside payments, if any,

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would be based on a yield of 24 bushels (30 bushels x 80 percent) per acre. The 24-bushel figure would be used both in determining the number of wheat certificates for which the farm is eligible and the per acre additional payment.

The same method of adjustment will apply to acreage set-aside under the feed grain program.

Producers who want to assure themselves of meeting set-aside productivity requirements may request inspection and measurement service. These services, furnished at nominal cost by ASCS, guarantee the acceptability of set-aside both as to quantity and quality. The services are provided by each ASC county office.

AG HORIZON IS BRIGHTER

The outlook for U.S. farmers is brighter than it has been for many years, due to several spectacular breakthroughs this year, Under Secretary of Agriculture J. Phil Campbell recently told a group at the New York State Fair.

The first breakthrough cited by Campbell is in the area of farm income.

"For the first time," he said, "realized net farm income will exceed \$18 billion. Only once, before this year, did realized net income even break through \$17 billion, and that was in the post World War II year of 1947,

when we had more than twice as many farms as today.

"Between 1968 and this year, realized gross farm income jumped from \$50.9 billion to an estimated \$64.9 billion. Realized net farm income will be about \$18.2 billion in 1972--compared with \$14.7 billion in 1968. Net income per farm from farming will be about \$6,430 against \$4,809 in 1968. The average income after taxes per person on farms will escalate from \$2,200 in 1968 to \$3,087 in 1972."

Equally dramatic, the Under Secretary said, is the breakthrough in foreign trade. U.S. agricultural exports reached an all-time high of \$8 billion in fiscal year ended June 30, 1972, following the previous all-time high of \$7.8 billion in the preceeding fiscal year. Shipments of farm goods to foreign markets this past fiscal year were a full 40 percent higher than in fiscal 1969, he declared.

Campbell emphasized the importance of trade with Eastern Europe, Russia, and China. Presidential visits to China, Russia, and Poland and trade teams exploration of trade

possibilities have resulted in sales by American farmers of nearly \$1 billion worth of feed grains and oilseeds

China's Choicest Land

After centuries of intensive effort, the Chinese still cultivate only about 11 percent of their land. The remaining area is either too cold, too dry, or too rugged to be cultivated at current levels of technology.

The Chinese claim only a third of their cultivated land is fertile, and roughly half is mountainous. Thus, only a small share of the land presently in production is naturally endowed with the right combination of climate, soils, and topography needed for high crop yields.

Against this backdrop, it's remarkable that such a small land area—7 percent of the world's cultivated land—could sustain a fourth of the world's population. However, through multiple cropping China's annual sown area exceeds that of the U.S.

China relies mainly on intensive use of labor in agricultural production. Eighty to 85 percent of the population is directly engaged in agriculture compared with only 5 percent in the U.S.

In 1962, a dramatic policy shift made agriculture the main target for development, and generated a fairly rapid restoration of food production to the favorable levels preceding the Great Leap Forward in 1958. On a per capita basis, many crops—including some grains—haven't yet regained the pre-Leap level.

Since the mid-sixties, however, China's food production rate appears to have edged slightly ahead of population growth. This trend is expected to continue for the remainder of the current five-year plan—China's fourth—which began last year.

to Russia for delivery this year. In addition, Campbell said, we have sold our first farm products to China -- 2,000 tons of linseed oil.

A third significant breakthrough cited by the Under Secretary is the acceptance and use of the market-oriented farm programs made possible under the Agricultural Act of 1970. These programs, he said, permit farmers to plant the crops the market wants, give farmers maximum management freedom for lower production costs, and strengthen the American farmer's competitive position in the world.

A fourth breakthrough, which is opening up new horizons, is the progress being made in rural development. "Funding of principal rural development programs in fiscal 1972 is more than four times that available in 1969, with 29 of 34 rural development programs expanded above fiscal 1969 levels," the Under Secretary stated.

"The new Rural Development Act will greatly expand the Department's loan authority to finance a wide range of essential com-

munity services....I am convinced that we are on the right track toward building a better rural America. I firmly believe there is a tremendous growth opportunity in rural America. I think rural areas have an exciting future," Campbell told his audience.

WELCOME, NEW READERS

We recently received a new directory of Conservation District supervisors. This gave us the opportunity to update our

mailing list for this LETTER. To those receiving it for the first time, welcome.

Also to you, and to others on our LETTER list, if your address is wrong, if you're receiving two copies, if you'd like to be taken off our list, let us know.

NW STAFF ASSISTANT NAMED

Jack Van Mark, Wyoming farmer and businessman, has been named staff assistant in our Northwest Regional office in Washington, D.C. Jack has served as member of the Wyoming State ASC committee and in the Wyoming State office as district director and production adjustment program specialist.

He has also been president of the Goshen (Wyo.) County Wheat Growers, the Wyoming Wheat Growers, and a vice president of the National Wheat Growers Association. He is also a member of the Farm Bureau and in 1966 was selected as Wyoming's Outstanding Young Farmer.

NEW REAP LEAFLET

Enclosed is a new leaflet describing the rural environmental assistance program (REAP). This should be helpful in explaining the objectives and operations of this program, both to rural people who might want to participate, and to urban people who share the benefits from conservation practices, especially those which have major pollution control and environmental improvement benefits.

Since this is a general explanation, anyone interested in more details including practices and rates of cost-sharing should be advised to contact their ASCS county office.



Joel P. Antrim
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